

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-11 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07

INR-07 LAB-04 NSAE-00 SIL-01 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 L-03

NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /092 W

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R 131615Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1312

INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

USMISSION GENEVA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

C O N F I D E N T I A L TUNIS 0209

E.O.: 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, ELAB, TS

SUBJ: SAYAH CALLS ON PARTY TO FACE UP TO ACHOUR

REF : TUNIS 0178, 75 TUNIS 7423

1. MOHAMED SAYAH, DESTOURIAN SOCIALIST PARTY (PSD) DIRECTOR, HAS CONFIRMED IN PUBLIC THE ONGOING CONTEST BETWEEN HIMSELF AND TRADE UNION LEADER, HABIB ACHOUR (RFTELS). SPEAKING JANUARY 9 TO A SCHEDULED MEETING OF TUNIS-AREA PARTY CELL PRESIDENTS, SAYAH SAID THERE ARE ELEMENTS SPREADING RUMORS OF A CRISIS EXISTING BETWEEN THE PARTY AND "THE NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS" (WHICH, OF COURSE, MEANS THE UGTT). BY "RUMORS" SAYAH ALMOST SURELY MEANS THE THREAT LAUNCHED BY ACHOUR TO HAVE THE UGTT BREAK WITH THE PARTY UNLESS SAYAH IS FIRED (TUNIS 7423).

2. IN HIS REMARKS, AS REPORTED TUNIS DAILY LA PRESSE JANUARY 11, SAYAH WENT ON TO WARN PARTY MEMBERS WORKING EITHER IN THE BRANCHES OF THE PARTY OR IN THE "NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS"

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AGAINST THE DANGER OF THESE RUMORS "SPREAD BY ELEMENTS

WHO ARE DEVOID OF PATRIOTISM AND WHO ARE OF NO USE TO THE WORKERS." PARTY MEMBERS, HE SAID, SHOULD FACE UP TO THESE NOXIOUS ELEMENTS WHO ARE INCAPABLE OF HARMING THE NATIONAL INTERESTS SINCE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE PARTY AND THE NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS ARE BASED ON RECIPROCAL UNDERSTANDING AND ONN "THE SACRED NATIONAL UNITY." SAYAH EXHORTED HIS LISTENERS TO DO AWAY WITH WILDCAT STRIKES "WHICH CONSTITUTE THE GREATEST DANGER TO THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE NATION IN GENERAL AND TO THOSE OF THE WORKERS IN PARTICULAR."

3. COMMENT: THE PUBLIC AIRING OF THIS DOMESTIC POLITICAL DISPUTE IS ONE OF ITS MOST STRIKING FEATURES, GIVEN THE DETERMINATION OF TUNISIAN LEADERSHIP TO CONVEY AN IMAGE OF NATIONAL UNITY. READERS OF THE TUNIS PRESS WERE STRUCK BY THE PHOTOGRAPHS OF SAYAH'S MEETING: HE SHARED THE PODIUM WITH INTERIOR MINISTER TAHAR BELKHODJA, DEPUTY DEFENSE MINISTER AHMED BENNOUR, AND ASSISTANT SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE UGTT MUSTAPHA MAKHLOUF, THE MAN ACHOUR HAS SAID SPEARHEADED THE EFFORT BY SAYAH TO UPSEAT ACHOUR (REFTELS). ALL THREE HAPPEN TO BE PARTY CELL PRESIDENTS SO THEIR PRESENCE WAS NORMAL. HOWEVER, THERE ARE OTHER MINISTERS WHO ARE ALSO CELL PRESIDENTS WHO DID NOT APPEAR. THERE IS, THEREFORE, SOME REASON TO THINK SAYAH SET UP THE MEETING IN THIS WAY IN ORDER TO TELL ACHOUR (AND THE PUBLIC), " I CONTROL THE PARTY, AND THE ARMY AND THE POLICE ARE ON MY SIDE, AND YOU, ACHOUR, CAN'T EVEN FIRE YOUR OWN ASSISTANT BECAUSE HE IS MY MAN\*".  
KING

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